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ABSTRACT

The article gives suggestions for mainstreaming physically handicapped students into regular physical education classes during instruction in team sports. The report lists six pointers for general class organization and instruction, such as establishing an atmosphere of acceptance, emphasizing the positive contributions each student can make, and requiring all students' participation in pre-play activities. Suggestions for stationary practice and moving drills are given, as are hints for facilitating the handicapped individual's participation in game play. Specific suggestions for the participation of the handicapped are listed for the following sports: basketball, floor hockey, football, soccer, and softball. (PHR)

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MAINSTREAMING THE PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED STUDENT FOR TEAM SPORTS

by Susan J. Grosse*

Expecting handicapped students to join a class of their nonhandicapped peers and participate in a team sports activity on an equal basis with them is an unrealistic goal. However, it is equally unrealistic to assume that because a student may move slower or in a different manner, possibly think slower, or receive information from altered sensory data that participation in team sports with nonhandicapped students is impossible. Assignment to study hall or relegation of handicapped students to score keeping duties is no longer an acceptable alternative to appropriate physical education instruction in team sports.

With instructional emphasis on individual skill development and a class atmosphere that encourages all to participate to the best of their abilities, mainstreaming can flourish and everyone involved can benefit. It is at the upper elementary and middle or junior high school level that foundations in team sports skills are established in class and applied during intramural programs. Whether the handicapped student is to go on and participate in varsity athletics in high school or join an adult wheelchair sports program, he/she needs the same instructional opportunities as nonhandicapped students. Whether the individual is to become a sports announcer or a television football fan, he/she still needs a basic knowledge of how the game is played

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* Many thanks to Susan J. Grosse for contributing her time and thoughts to this Practical Pointer. A physical education teacher at Frederick J. Gaenslen School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Susan Grosse is highly qualified to offer ideas that really work for mainstreaming physical handicapped students in team sports.

We are very grateful for the assistance that her Practical Pointer offers to all physical educators and recreators who work with handicapped individuals.

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Nonhandicapped students have always had this opportunity. Now, with the current emphasis on mainstreaming, handicapped individuals can have this chance also. Following are some practical pointers designed to facilitate mainstreaming the impaired, disabled, or handicapped student into regular physical education classes during instruction in team sports.

General Class Organization and Instruction

* Establish an atmosphere of acceptance of all students in the class, emphasizing the abilities of each student and the positive contributions each can make to the team effort.

* Individualize instruction by allowing each student to perform the standard skills in the most functional manner possible for him/her.

* Give each physically handicapped student responsibility for the care and maintenance of his/her own special equipment. Vigorous activity does tend to loosen screws, bolts, etc., on crutches and wheelchairs. For safety's sake, students must keep their equipment in good repair. It may also be helpful to keep a small tool kit--pliers, screw driver, heavy tape, extra wing nuts--available for emergency situations.

Students at Courage Center (Golden Valley, Minnesota)
participating in floor hockey

* Make physically handicapped students aware of and expect them to observe safety precautions relevant to their situation: For example:

  . As in the rules for wheelchair sports, footrests should be used at all times.

  . Students who need seatbelts for support in their wheelchairs should be sure to have them on and properly adjusted at all times.

  . As in wheelchair sports rules, competitors may not raise their hips off the seats of chairs at any time. Otherwise a rules violation is called for unfair advantage.

  . Students in wheelchairs should be expected to propel themselves and keep their chairs under control at all times.

  . Students should be encouraged to use special sports wheelchairs if they are available. Note: Schools may wish to have several chairs of this nature available for student use if wheelchair-bound students will be in their program on an ongoing basis.

  . Students on crutches should not be allowed to use their crutches as implements of the sport involved. They should be used for support and locomotion only. In situations of contact of one student's crutch with an opponent's body, a foul is charged against the player who initiated contact; i.e., tripping or hitting on the part of the crutch user as well as holding or tripping on the part of the opponent.

* All students should be required to participate in pre-play activities such as:

  . General physical conditioning.

  . Specific class warm-up activities.

  . Learning how to fall, especially if the student uses a wheelchair or crutches. Falling is not a disaster. Everyone who has played a team sport has fallen at some time or other. However, students with crutches or a chair need to learn how to fall safely and then untangle and get back in the game as soon as possible.

  . Chalk-talks or verbal explanations. Even if the student cannot see or hear the entire presentation they can still achieve some benefit from what they pick-up with their other senses.

  . Skill drills and individual practice.

* Do not make the mistake of excusing or excluding students from a facet of instruction because you think that they may not understand or benefit from it. Rather, encourage students to obtain as much information and development as they can. Remember, a teacher's expectations often dictate just how much a student will learn. Don't hinder your student's chances by setting your expectations too low.

Drills and Skill Practice

There are essentially two types of drill and skill practice methods commonly used in team sport instruction--stationary practice and moving drills. For stationary practice all students should be able to participate on a fairly equal basis. Students perform the skill as taught using their own equipment and their own individual space in the gym. Those students who catch on to the explanation quicker or who move faster may get more practice done than others, and some students will certainly need more individual help. However, stationary practice is something in which all can participate. Some examples of stationary practice are:

Basketball--passing against a wall.

Softball--pop flys, throwing and catching to self.

Volleyball--volley against a wall.

Soccer--kick to wall and trap the return.

Football--directional maneuverability within a limited space.

Floor hockey--passing to the wall and stopping the return.

None of these activities requires interaction with another player and, as a result, each student is able to function at his/her own particular level of speed and ability, while still developing skills necessary for game play.

Moving drills require students to apply skills learned during stationary practice either through interacting with other players or in situations involving movement around the playing area. Examples of moving drills might include:

Basketball--dribble and shoot relay.

Softball--base running relay.

Volleyball--partner set and spike practice.

Soccer--moving pass drill.

Football--offensive play drills.

Floor hockey--dribble and hit to goal area drill.

To organize these drills so that everyone gets maximum practice on levels with individual ability, it might be helpful to:

* Provide for an even distribution of students with different handicapping conditions among squads or drill units. Having some strong students combined with some students who may need a little more work will keep the groups moving at a more even pace. It will also provide good student models for each group and give the teacher an opportunity to circulate throughout the class to monitor performance and give help, instead of tying the teacher to one slow group.

* Give special consideration to students who are obviously less mobile than the rest of the group by:

  . Placing them in a squad whose total number of students is less than the others to help equalize the time needed for performance of relays and shuttle activities.

  . Having a less mobile student go second or third during a relay rather than last (emphasizing their slowness) or first (getting the group off to a slower start than the others).

  . Designing drills where mobility-limited students can remain in one place, with the rest of the group rotating around them.

  . Using the station method, where each student does a moving drill but at his/her own individual pace at a particular station in the gym.

  . Designing a circuit system based on skills being developed, and then have students work the circuit relative to their own level of functional ability.

* Emphasize with the students that the purpose of a drill is to help each individual student develop his/her own sports skills. Though some drills can be made to be competitive, it should be remembered that their primary purpose is for skill learning.

Game Play

Application of skills learned during stationary practice and skill drills comprises the bulk of any team sports unit, and just as the nonhandicapped child needs to have opportunities to play team games, so does the handicapped student. At this particular level emphasis should be on learning rules and strategies of the game and how to combine the skills of all players into a team effort. Class should not be a highly competitive experience. Rather, intramural activities should be provided for those students who wish to play the game in a more competitive form. To facilitate the participation of the handicapped student in both class and intramural settings, the following might be helpful:

* Emphasize everyone's positive contribution to the team effort--what each player can do well, not what he/she does poorly.

* It may be necessary to remind players to play only their own positions to keep more able or skillful players from monopolizing the game.

* Arrange a fairly equal distribution of abilities when assigning teams.

* Assign fairly equal ability players in directly opposite positions.

* Use less mobile students for positions that do not require them to cover the entire court. For example, floor hockey--fullback; touch football--offensive guard.

* Use less skilled students for specialty skills, such as the designated hitter in softball, and have them concentrate on developing just those special skills.

* Switch the playing surface from grass to something smooth to accommodate wheelchairs.

* Develop coaching and officiating as student functions, especially for severely physically handicapped students (i.e., severe muscular dystrophy) who may have the intelligence and interest in sports but who are extremely limited in performance.

* Assign each player a specific function on the team for special play situations. For example, putting the ball in play from out-of-bounds.

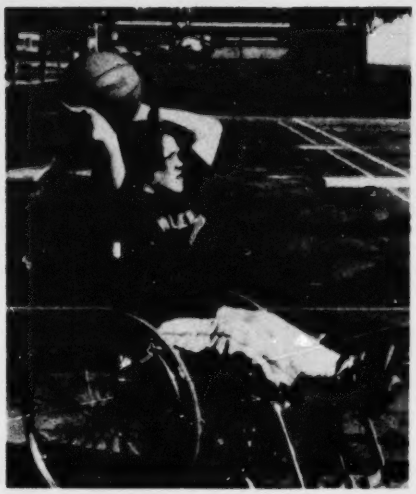
Each student in class should be allowed the opportunity to play on a team for relatively the same length of time. Five minutes of play for one student and the entire class period for another is neither fair nor instructionally sound. If the emphasis is on each student's positive contribution to the team, then the time spent in play will be both educational and enjoyable.

Student from Alameda (California) Public Schools uses an adapted badminton racket to participate with his peers.

Specific Team Sports

Individual team sports each present their own unique opportunity for learning. A good team sports program contains a variety of activities, and all students should be exposed to this variety. Each sport may, however, present different problems to the handicapped student who is mainstreamed. Some special considerations relative to particular team sports are discussed in this section.

BASKETBALL



Child with Larsen's Syndrome plays basketball on ZOOM, children's television show.

* Use less mobile players to take in out-of-bounds balls.

* Use less mobile players or an especially good shooter as the front court player on a fast-break play.

* Use a player in a wheelchair or on crutches as the player at the head of the lane in a diamond zone defense. He/she will take up more space and make an excellent obstacle.

* Apply wheelchair basketball rules where appropriate, such as:

  . For a player in a wheelchair a dribble means one bounce of the ball followed by one or two pushes on the wheels of the chair. The ball may be held on the player's lap during pushes.

  . Unlimited glide privileges are allowed during the dribble, provided a charging foul does not occur.

  . A walking student cannot tie a ball with a student in a wheelchair; however, the held ball and close guarding rules do apply.

FLOOR HOCKEY

* Use a soft rubber puck rather than the plastic ball or puck to slow down the pace of the game and encourage the use of particular skills.

* If a student is unable to hold a hockey stick it can be attached to the foundation of the wheelchair by putting solid support inside the stick and clamping it onto the chair.

FOOTBALL

* Use less mobile players as offensive guards to block for the quarterback.

* Attach rip flags to the sides of the wheelchair rather than to the person, where they might be inaccessible.

* Apply wheelchair football rules where appropriate. For example:

- Blocking is allowed from the front only. No blocking is allowed from the side or back, and no blocking is allowed on the large wheels.

- Substitute a pass or throw for a kick on the opening play or on fourth down.

- Substitute a single play from the three yard line for the point-after kick. If a running play succeeds, two points are awarded; if a passing play, one point.

SOCCER

* Allow wheelchair bound students to use their footrests to move the ball.

* Do not allow students using crutches to hit the ball with them; they can use their feet too.

SOFTBALL

* Allow a player to bat but not run. Have another player run the bases, or at least run to first base where the batter then again becomes the runner. This will allow a less mobile student the chance to become an asset to the team with good hitting and yet not cause lack of speed to become a liability.

* Allow the batter the choice of several types of bats. Sometimes a light aluminum or plastic bat may be easier to use, in which case one would need to switch balls also--just for that batter.

* When judging base running, a crutch or wheelchair wheel may be counted as touching the base rather than a foot.

* Allow the batter a choice of underhand or overhand pitching.

* Establish the practice of base coaches early so that those students who are easily confused will have help in the learning situation.

* Put a mobility impaired play in the third base or catcher position where less mobility is required.

* Do not allow players on crutches to use a crutch as a bat. Have them either drop one crutch (and have someone else run to first while they pick it up and then resume their position as runner) or have them let it hang from an arm while they bat.

Most team sports involve use of hands and arms. As a result some students who normally use crutches may prefer to use a wheelchair for sports participation to free their upper extremities. This is a perfectly acceptable alternative, particularily in light of the recent development of adult wheelchair sports programs. Students who become proficient at playing a team sport from a wheelchair will have skills which allow them to participate in this sport in their leisure time after school. For further information on wheelchair sports and rules refer to: Competitive Athletic Programs for Impaired, Disabled, and Handicapped Persons: Information Sheet, American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation: Information and Research Utilization Center, 1977 (revised), 22 pages, $2.20.